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1974/11/00

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Activity MD 978520
JVF 9/25/71

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PRIVATE STATEMENTS MADE BY PRC LEADERS TO SECRETARY
KISSINGER OR PRESIDENT NIXON REGARDING THE PEACEFUL
LIBERATION OF TAIWAN

July 11, 1971. (Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou)

Dr. Kissinger: For your consideration, and you don't need to settle this now, we are prepared, when the President visits, to discuss and sign an agreement for the mutual renouncing of force between our two countries such as you proposed in 1955.

Premier Chou: You know that this question must be linked to the Taiwan question and the question of China's internal affairs. Once these questions are brought into shape, then this question [of renunciation of force] will be easier to deal with. ...

Dr. Kissinger: We hope very much that the Taiwan issue will be solved peacefully.

Premier Chou: We are doing our best to do so...

October 21, 1971. (Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou)

Dr. Kissinger: We recognize that the People's Republic considers the subject of Taiwan an internal issue, and we will not challenge that. But to the degree that the People's Republic can on its own, in the exercise of its own sovereignty, declare its willingness to settle it [the Taiwan problem] by peaceful means, our actions will be easier. I am not speaking of undertaking to talk towards us as we asked in 1955, but something you do on your own. But whether you do or not, we will continue in the direction which I indicated. ...

Premier Chou: ... As to how the Chinese people will solve the question of the Taiwan regime, that is of secondary importance. I had told you that last time. I replied to you that we will try to bring about a peaceful settlement, the last morning before you left. ...

Dr. Kissinger: ... Our attempt will be to bring about a solution [of the Taiwan problem] within a framework of one China and by peaceful means. ...

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Dr. Kissinger: When Taiwan and China become one again by peaceful means then the [Mutual Defense] Treaty [with the ROC] would lapse. It is not a permanent feature of our foreign policy to be maintained under such circumstances. . .

Dr. Kissinger: . . . To be very frank with the Prime Minister, what we would like most and what we would encourage is a peaceful negotiation after which all the military relationships would be at an end.

Premier Chou: Assistance or relationships?

Dr. Kissinger: After there is a political settlement between Taiwan and mainland China, yes. We will not insist on maintaining an American presence or military installations on Taiwan after unification of China by peaceful negotiation has been achieved. And in those conditions we will be prepared to abrogate [the Defense Treaty] formally. If there is no peaceful settlement, which is the second contingency, then it's easier for us to withdraw our military presence in stages, which I indicated to the Prime Minister, than to abrogate the Treaty.

Premier Chou: I understand . . .

October 24, 1971. (Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou)

Premier Chou: And so the matter of crucial importance is for the U.S. to indicate it will not carry out or support any activities aimed at separating Taiwan from China. And then, as you said, you would state that "the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China." You should also say that the United States would encourage the Chinese to solve this internal matter by themselves through peaceful negotiations.

Dr. Kissinger: We are saying almost that.

October 25, 1971. (Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou)

Premier Chou (In a discussion of the language regarding the future of Taiwan draft communique): . . . And then the second part of [the U.S. formulation on Taiwan] is you express the hope the settlement of the Taiwan question consistent with this position will be achieved through peaceful negotiations. So in this way you are not restricted by any specific condition, such as that we will have to liberate Taiwan by such and such a date. We don't say that. . .

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Dr. Kissinger: One point I have never raised is that we need a peg to hang on this statement of withdrawals. We can do it by saying, "as tensions in Asia diminish." Another is if you state unilaterally, not as a joint statement, your intention to settle this question [of Taiwan] peacefully. Then we can say that "in view of this statement" the U.S. will progressively reduce its forces.

Premier Chou: That's a thing of the future.

Dr. Kissinger: What do you mean?

Premier Chou: Because of the present time the Taiwan regime is still usurping our seat in the United Nations. They claim to represent it now.

Dr. Kissinger: But I don't understand what that has to do with it.

Premier Chou: It is related. Think it over. How would they approve of us declaring that we want to effect a peaceful liberation of Taiwan?

Dr. Kissinger: How would Taiwan ...?

Premier Chou: Chiang Kai-shek.

Dr. Kissinger: He won't approve anything you do anyway.

Premier Chou: But particularly if we were to say that this formulation is better -- it's more or less like yours.

Dr. Kissinger: Well, I think I understand your point of view. It's too important an issue to be settled here at the table. I will take it back. ...

Premier Chou: ...As I told you last night, when Chairman Mao spoke to Edgar Snow, he was sure your President will be able to resolve this question [of Taiwan]. ... And yesterday we were discussing the Taiwan question. We have already told you all of our thinking on this matter.

Dr. Kissinger: I know.

Premier Chou: If we are to wait another six years, we may wait another six years, but then we will liberate by another means, not this means. You understand.

Dr. Kissinger: We are not asking you to wait six years.

Premier Chou: Precisely because we have confidence in your taking a responsible position.

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February 22, 1972. (President Nixon and Premier Chou)

President Nixon: ... We will support any peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue that can be worked out. ... And the reduction of the remaining third of our military presence on Taiwan will go forward as progress is made on the peaceful resolution of the problem.

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Premier Chou: ... We have already waited over twenty years [regarding Taiwan] -- I am very frank here -- and we can wait a few more years. I can go a step further. Even when Taiwan comes back to the motherland, we will not establish any nuclear bases there. ...

February 24, 1972. (Dr. Kissinger, VM Ch'iao, and Premier Chou)

Dr. Kissinger: Let me ask you this. We will be able, on the basis of the preceding paragraph, to say to the press that on international disputes we have renounced the use of force. Then on Taiwan I would say that China does not consider Taiwan an international dispute.

Vice Minister Ch'iao: So there is no need to add this phrase here.

Dr. Kissinger: But is it all right if we explain the meaning of the communique in this sense afterwards -- can we say after we get back that one of the results of our trip was that we have renounced the use of force in our disputes with one another? Then we will say -- we will not embarrass you -- that you do not consider Taiwan an international dispute. We will not be tricky on this.

Vice Minister Ch'iao: Our position on the Taiwan question we have stated on many occasions.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand. We will not apply it to the Taiwan question. We know your position -- you have stated it since 1955, and we will not use this communique as a way of making you change your position on this.

Vice Minister Ch'iao: We have always considered that the Taiwan question had two aspects. One is your military presence, which we should try to resolve through negotiations, whereas the question with Chiang Kai-shek is a domestic matter.

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Dr. Kissinger: Let us drop this then. ...

Premier Chou: ... You want a peaceful liberation [for Taiwan]. Dr. Kissinger mentioned in his private talks on the last day [of his July trip] and in reply to Dr. Kissinger we said that we will strive for peaceful liberation. This is a matter for both sides. We want this. What will we do if they [the leaders in Taiwan] don't want it? While your armed forces are there [on Taiwan] our armed forces will not engage in military confrontation with your armed forces. ...

...

Premier Chou: And so it is our hope, it would be good if the liberation of Taiwan could be realized in your next term of office. That, of course, is only a hope. Of course that is our internal affair. We cannot express the hope that you should not interfere in this internal affair. You should not impose anything on us nor should we impose anything on Chiang Kai-shek. But also, Mr. President, you should be aware that there are not too many days left to Chiang Kai-shek. ...

...

Premier Chou: I should say very frankly that when Dr. Kissinger said that it would take ten years [to solve the Taiwan question], that would be too long. This was at a briefing conference [held by Dr. Kissinger]. You said that maybe it would take ten years, but that would be too long. It is better not to mention any date. I can't wait ten years. You have ten years. ...

...

Premier Chou: So we hope to solve this question [of Taiwan] in a friendly way since already more than twenty years have passed. According to the solution to the question put forward by John Foster Dulles at the Warsaw talks, the time limit has already been passed. Dulles put forward the proposal through the American ambassador that so long as China did not use force for a period of ten, fifteen, or twenty years, he would be satisfied. If we had concluded such an agreement then the fifteen years would have long passed by now. ... But if we accepted such a principle, it would be equivalent to accepting interference in our internal affairs. So we cannot accept that. ... We are not asking you to remove Chiang Kai-shek. We will take care of that ourselves.

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President Nixon: Peacefully?

Premier Chou: Yes, we have self-confidence. ...

February 25, 1972. (Dr. Kissinger and Vice Minister Ch'iao)

Vice Minister Ch'iao: You can say that [the final withdrawal of U.S. forces from Taiwan will come about] entirely as your own initiative, not as an agreement between you and us. That is, you consider there is such a prospect. And you consider that this prospect is coming closer. And so you are able to make the progressive reduction. As for what happens finally, you can entirely link that up with the peaceful settlement.

Dr. Kissinger: But if we can do that in language, then we have no problem.

February 16, 1973. (Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou)

Premier Chou: Shall we say a few more words on the Taiwan issue? Do you envisage that there will be a definite time limit for your aid to Taiwan, military aid? Is there going to be another contract after this [F5-E co-production] contract? I don't mean that if you do this for their armed forces that it will mean a great deal. I just want to know something about it so that we can coordinate our action during our work. I can assure you that we don't mean we are going to liberate it by the armed forces. We have no such plan at the moment.

...

Dr. Kissinger: The first two years [in the next phase of normalization] is the reduction of our forces. Then after 1974 we want to work toward full normalization and full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China before the middle of 1976.

Now we would like to keep some form of representation on Taiwan, but we haven't figured out a formula that would be mutually acceptable. And we would like to discuss with you, in the spirit of what you have always discussed with us, some understanding that the final solution will be a peaceful one. In that context we will exercise great restraint in our military supply policy. ...

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November 12, 1973. (Chairman Mao, Premier Chou, Secretary Kissinger)

Chairman Mao: So long as you sever the diplomatic relations with Taiwan, then it is possible for our two countries to solve the issue of diplomatic relations. That is to say, like we did with Japan. As for the question of our relations with Taiwan, that is quite complex. I do not believe in a peaceful transition. [To the Foreign Minister]: Do you believe in it?

Secretary Kissinger: Do I? He asks the Foreign Minister.

Chairman Mao: I'm asking him [the Foreign Minister]. [Premier Chou said something that was not translated.] They [the leaders on Taiwan] are a bunch of counter-revolutionaries. How could they cooperate with us? I say that we can do without Taiwan for the time being, and let it come after one hundred years. Do not take matters on this world so rapidly. Why is there need to be in such great haste? It is only such an island with a population of a dozen or more million.

Premier Chou: Now they have sixteen million.

Chairman Mao: As for your relations with us, I think they need not take a hundred years.

September 3, 1974. (VM Ch'iao and Fulbright Congressional Delegation)

Senator Fong interjected the observation that the Taiwan Government as well as the People's Republic of China both claim there is only one China. Furthermore, he said, the United States Government in the Shanghai Communiqué takes the same view. Why, therefore, can the two opposite Chinese parties not sit down and negotiate their differences?

Vice Minister Ch'iao answered by saying that it would in fact be highly desirable if it were possible to achieve reunification by peaceful means. The basic attitude of the Chinese Government, however, is that peaceful reunification is an impossibility. The United States Government should, therefore, not concern itself further with this problem, but should take steps to assure that the Chinese may settle this issue among themselves.

But what, asked Representative Zablocki, is the alternative to a peaceful solution?

It is simple logic, answered Vice Minister Ch'iao. The opposite of a peaceful solution is a nonpeaceful solution. Any solution is either one or the other. If it is not peaceful, it will be otherwise.

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But, asked Representative Zablocki, isn't this somewhat contradictory? After all, China is supposed to support peace.

There is no contradiction, said Vice Minister Ch'iao. Ever since 1955, when discussions with the United States Government were begun, the American side has always tried to get us to commit ourselves to a peaceful solution of this problem. We have always refused to do so for the simple reason that this is an internal affair. As a result, some people in America, many people in fact, have said that China does not want peace. But, the Chinese view of this problem is quite different. We see the Taiwan question as the last phase of our civil war which has continued for many decades. Consequently, the Chinese Government is not in a hurry over Taiwan. We are prepared to wait even for a hundred years. In this sense Taiwan is not a matter of paramount importance. Of course, in international affairs we stand for peaceful solutions to problems between nations.

Senator Humphrey noted that the U.S. Government has commitments made by treaties to Taiwan. At present, important political changes are taking place in the United States which will greatly affect the eventual resolution of this difficulty. As people-to-people exchanges continue to develop and as President Ford continues to pursue the same policies which President Nixon initiated, it will become increasingly clear that the U.S. Government will not be an obstacle to the solution of the Taiwan problem. Obviously the patience of the Chinese Government is very helpful in this respect.

On the subject of treaties, Vice Minister Ch'iao rejoined, these were signed under President Eisenhower, but they bear the mark of John Foster Dulles. That was his era and these were his ideas. Americans always point to these treaties as commitments, but this is in reality not involved with the relations between our two countries. The commitments are your affair and it is your problem what to do with these treaties. To normalize relations with the People's Republic it is necessary to make a complete break with Taiwan...

October 2, 1974. (Secretary Kissinger and Vice Minister Ch'iao)

Secretary Kissinger: ...So there are two issues of principle [regarding normalization]: The nature of the office we will maintain [in Taipei]; and the nature of the guarantee for a peaceful transition.

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Vice Minister Ch'iao: On the question of a peaceful transition on Taiwan, maybe your understanding is different than mine. In our view there are two different problems, the Taiwan question and relations between our two countries, and they our relations with Taiwan. Our idea is to separate these two questions. As for our relations with Taiwan, as Chairman Mao said, the main idea is that we don't believe in the possibility of a peaceful transition. But in our relations with the United States, that is another question.

Talking about a peaceful transition, there are also two aspects. That is, at present our [U.S.-PRC] relations, now you recognize Taiwan ... The transition in our relations can be smooth but the possibility for a smooth transition in our relations with Taiwan is very small. I recall that this was the focal point in your discussion with Chairman Mao.

Secretary Kissinger: But I recall that he said the transition [in PRC relations with Taiwan] could take a hundred years ...

Let me sum up your points: The transition in U.S.-PRC relations will go smoothly. As for the transformation of the form of government on Taiwan, this will be over a long period. It does not have to occur immediately, but it isn't likely to be smooth. Do I understand your position correctly? (Ch'iao: Yes.)

Then why don't we consider these problems further, and then discuss them in Peking.

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